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THE TEACHER'S HOME

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In the extended campaign now going on for the betterment of the rural schools in the United States, perhaps there is no single factor that will contribute so much permanent benefit to rural education as the teacher's cottage. New and enlarged courses of study, modern school buildings, expensive apparatus, and greater facilities for industrial education will not in themselves give us a better system of rural schools. The hope of our country schools lies in securing first-class teachers and in retaining them longer than one term. A home, built, furnished, and maintained by the school district, in which the teacher may live while serving her community, will do more than any other one thing to get good teachers into the country and to keep them there.

The home furnished to the teacher by the school district has been called by different names in various parts of our country. In this part of the West it is usually spoken of as the teacher's cottage; in some states, particularly in the South, as the teacher's manse; in many other states, as the teacherage, and in old, classical New England as the dominage.

This residence, whatever its name, is built near the schoolhouse, usually on the school grounds, or as part of the school building. The style of structure ranges through varied architectural schemes from the lean-to, the shack, the school attic apartment, the cedar-shake cottage, the one-room cottage, the tent-house, the old, abandoned schoolhouse remodeled, the six-room bungalow, the double house of ten or twelve rooms, to the modern residence—the cost varying from \$50 to \$6,000.

The teacher's cottage is to the teacher what the parsonage is to the preacher. It assures a suitable home for the teacher while teaching her school, where she may rest and have her privacy,

which is so vital to the best efforts of all teachers. It is chiefly in connection with the rural schools that teachers' cottages have been built, and it is only within the last decade that our educators and school officials have seen the promise of them and urged their erection.

The state of Washington is usually accredited as erecting (1905) the first teacher's cottage in the United States, but the writer finds this antedated by one erected in Hall County, Nebraska, Rural District No. 1, in 1894, at a cost of \$1,000 in gold. As far as we can learn, this was the first home built for a teacher by a school district in the United States. It is a frame structure, 22 by 28 feet, and 14 feet high, having an addition 12 by 16 feet and 10 feet high. It contains seven rooms, two halls, a screened porch and a cellar. The residence is kept in good repair, and has been used constantly all these years, having been occupied during the last twelve years by the teacher of the district, Mrs. Theresa Sullivan, and her two sons.

But to the state of Washington must go the honor of inaugurating effectively the movement for teachers' cottages. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Henry B. Dewey, in 1911, sent a circular letter to the superintendent of public instruction in every state in the United States inquiring of them what had been done regarding the erection of cottages for teachers in connection with the public schools. Forty-one answers were received. Thirty-four had no cottages; two had one each; three had "very few"; and one state (South Carolina) replied, "a considerable number of schools supply cottages for teachers" (Washington State Department of Education, *Bulletin No. 7, 1911*).

This inquiry was the first attempt to secure data on the erection of teachers' homes in this country. At this time Washington already had 17 districts furnishing homes to teachers. Now it has 112 teachers' cottages. This very remarkable growth is due chiefly to the enthusiasm and leadership of Josephine Corliss Preston, present superintendent of public instruction of Washington, who, as assistant superintendent of Walla Walla County, established in 1905 the first teacherage in that state by converting an old, delapidated, portable cook-car into a home for the district

teacher, when this teacher was about to leave her school because she could find no place to board.

In March, 1916, the writer sent a questionnaire to every state in the union, seeking information regarding the growth of the movement to erect teachers' cottages, their method of maintenance, construction, and size, and their feasibility. From 48 states, 40 state school officials sent replies, and while the number of cottages was not exactly stated in all cases, the replies show over 600 teacherages in the United States. It may be a surprise to know that this number belongs chiefly to the South and to the Northwest. In the South there are over 200, and this number is exceeded in the Northwest. The New England, North Atlantic, and North Central States have very few teachers' cottages; New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Kentucky report none. In the West, Kansas, Wyoming, and Utah report none. Washington has 112, Oklahoma 58, Tennessee 35, North Dakota 30, Oregon 29, South Carolina 26, and Montana and Georgia more than 20 each.

There are some interesting facts connected with the growth and evolution of the teacher's cottage. In Nebraska, where the first one was built in 1894, the movement has spread very slowly, for this state reports less than a dozen. Kansas, with almost 8,000 one-room rural schoolhouses, does not have a teacher's cottage. North Dakota, with 30, is in contrast with South Dakota with only one which is connected with a consolidated school, twelve miles from any town. Montana has 20 odd, and Colorado 60 or more; yet Wyoming, which is between these two states, has none.

Most European countries are far in advance of us in providing homes for teachers, as is true regarding many things concerning rural education. For many years, homes have been built and furnished free to teachers in Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and England.

In England the Board of Education draws all plans and approves all cottages built in connection with schoolhouses. The cottage has been standardized. Every cottage must have a parlor, kitchen, scullery, and at least two bedrooms. The staircase must

be directly accessible from the entrance as well as from each room. The smallest dimensions that will be approved by the Board are:

	Feet
Kitchen	12×10
Parlor	12×12
One bedroom not less than	12×10
One bedroom not less than	9× 8

In Victoria, Australia, in 1914, 17 new cottages for teachers were erected, and 22 remodeled. This country has already 1,404 teacherages—more than one for every two schoolhouses. Here the state board must also approve of all plans for cottages.

In most states in the United States where cottages are furnished, they are paid for by local levy, while in a few states there is no legal provision for their erection. In the early days in Washington there was no such provision, but cottage-building went on just the same. In a few states, cottages are built as a part of the schoolhouse. Then there can be no question as regards maintenance. In 1915, Minnesota legislated specifically for teachers' homes by authorizing school boards in consolidated districts to "acquire sites of not less than two acres, and erect necessary and suitable buildings thereon, including a suitable dwelling for teachers, when money therefor has been voted by the district" (sec. 29, Laws of 1915).

In a few cases the teacher's house has been built and furnished by popular subscription, or from money earned by giving socials. Few states report charging rent for the cottages, but in some of them a free home is counted as part salary. Usually the district furnishes the cottage completely, while in a few everything is furnished except dishes, cooking utensils, bedding, and linen.

As was said, these homes vary in architectural beauty from the lean-to, costing about \$50, to the modern residence, costing \$6,000 or more. From three to five rooms is the size most commonly erected. The better, more costly and modern buildings are found with consolidated schools, where the entire teaching force may make its home. Frequently the house is built double—one side being occupied by the principal and his family, and the other side by the teachers. The most novel as well as the most assured home for the teacher is reported from Georgia. Miss C. S. Parrish,

state rural school supervisor, writes, in speaking of the inchoate condition of the movement in that state: "I know one teacher who has a portable house, 'pitches' it in a patron's yard, and moves her house when she removes herself."

The advantages of the teacher's cottage justify its maintenance. First, it attracts better teachers to the country. After many years of observation on this point, Josephine Corliss Preston of Washington asserts: "Let it be known that a district furnishes a school cottage for the use of the teacher and that district may have its choice from among the best teachers the state affords."

Secondly, more married men teachers will go into the country schools if cottages are furnished. Eighty-two per cent of the rural teachers of Denmark are men. This is due chiefly to the fact that free homes are furnished with all rural schools, together with a few acres of ground where the man and his family may live during the entire year. With the consolidation of schools and the introduction of agriculture and industrial work into the rural schools, more married men teachers become an absolute necessity, if our country schools are to approach the efficiency of the city schools, and become real community centers.

Thirdly, the teacher's cottage gives the teacher privacy and rest which is not possible when she is boarding, even in the best-regulated farm home. Perhaps the teacher, more than any other person, needs, after working hours, rest and quiet. She needs regular meals and a comfortable sleeping-place. The rural teacher who is regularly aroused during nine long months—often Sunday included—for a five o'clock breakfast, eats a cold lunch, and then waits, after walking through snow, mud, and rain, for a six or seven o'clock dinner; who is obliged to sleep in a cold room with boisterous youngsters, becomes a promising candidate for the hospital or the sanitarium. Many teachers never have an evening alone, and their study-room is the living-room of the family. Can anyone blame the teacher for going to town every Friday evening to remain until Monday, or to the city at the first opportunity to remain permanently?

Fourthly, the tenure of teachers is lengthened. This is especially true of married men. One of the greatest evils found in

our rural schools today is the frequent change among teachers. While harm may come from teachers remaining too long in one community, vastly greater harm is very likely to come from having a new teacher every year. Reports show that where the district has a cottage, school directors frequently have a waiting-list of good teachers. The cottage becomes a real home for the teacher—a place where visitors may come; where books, current magazines, and papers are found; where individuality and personal freedom can be enjoyed; where ideals may be realized, and where the teacher can be a real, natural, happy, and independent person—for when you live in the home of another you must conform to the customs, standards, and requirements of others.

Lastly, the teacher's cottage is a strong factor in making the school a social center. Where the principal and wife occupy the cottage, parents and patrons will naturally take a deeper interest in school and social affairs. The cottage offers a place for various social events. Here may gather the pupils, on invitation, for school parties and socials, the parent-teachers' organization, and all teachers' meetings. While the grange meets in the schoolhouse, the domestic science club, composed of farmers' wives, may have their food demonstrations in the cottage. Perhaps the greatest value of all these meetings comes from the personal contact of teacher, pupil, and parent. Rural isolation is broken up. The teacher's cottage throws about the school a homelike atmosphere which pervades all social gatherings, and brings the home and the school closer together.

What, now, may be said against the teacher's cottage? The movement has come upon us so quickly that all objections have not as yet been met. The first objection most frequently heard is that a young woman teacher cannot live alone in an isolated cottage, located near the schoolhouse. This is true. The remedy for this is consolidation. Where this is impossible, then it is easy, usually, for the teacher to get someone to live with her—some relative or one of the larger girls who wishes to earn part of her way and who has a long distance to walk. Such pupils can be found in almost every school.

Another objection is that erecting homes for teachers in the district will delay consolidation which may be greatly needed. Where several good and substantial cottages exist, there is a direct loss to the local district if consolidation takes place, for the cottages will not then be needed. This would be true, but it would seem that any community progressive enough to erect teachers' cottages would also vote for consolidation if such were really needed, and sustain a small loss, while securing many advantages in the consolidated school.

Another objection is that the teacher, after working all day, should not clean, cook, and wash dishes. Saturday should be a holiday for the teacher we are told, and not a day devoted to washing clothes, cleaning windows, and arranging the house to receive the director's wife who comes with her neighbor to inspect and judge the teacher's housekeeping ability. These arguments seem plausible, but most evidence in the matter seems to show that a reasonable amount of such work is enjoyed by teachers occupying cottages. Most active and ambitious teachers will welcome the opportunity to do a little such work—it is domestic science at first hand. The testimony of teachers living in cottages, as gathered from various reports, overthrows the objection that the home cares connected with a cottage are too many and too burdensome for the average teacher.

Occasionally, we hear objections to the teacher's cottage from one of wide and successful experience. Such comes from State Superintendent J. A. Churchill of Oregon. Commenting upon the feasibility of the plan, he writes:

So long as a large majority of teachers in the rural schools are young, unmarried women, it is absurd to attempt to persuade school boards to build these teacherages. An unmarried woman teacher will not violate the proprieties by living in a cottage all alone, removed some distance, perhaps, from any other residence. Then again, if a teacher has given without stint all of her energies to the work of the day, she should not be required to go to a cottage, cook her own meals, and spend her evenings without the companionship of some good woman. The teacherage is all right for some unmarried man who may wish to "batch" it, or some married teacher with a family.

But all these objections are being met one by one, and the erection of teachers' cottages is bound to continue. All industrial

concerns now fully recognize that the best way to increase the efficiency of their workingmen is to improve their home conditions. Just so with the teacher. If our rural schools had comfortable and convenient cottages for teachers, they would at once have better teachers and more men teachers; tenure for teachers would be longer and standardization of schools would be easier; teachers and parents would become friends more quickly, and the school would more likely become a strong social center.

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